Department of Justice Canada | Ministère de la Justice Canada | Canada

ADDRESS BY
IRWIN COTLER,
MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL OF CANADA

PRESS CONFERENCE
CIVIL CODE BICENTENIAL CELEBRATIONS

13 SEPTEMBER 2004
MONTREAL, QUEBEC

Check against delivery.

I am very pleased to be here with you today and, in particular, to join my Quebec counterpart, Jacques Dupuis, in extending a warm welcome to Madame Nicole Guedj, Secretary of State for Victims' Rights, and to all our French, Quebec and Canadian colleagues and friends who have come to mark two significant, even historic events: the bicentenial of the French Civil Code and the tenth anniversary of the new Civil Code of Quebec.

The fact that many French dignitaries are here today bears testimony to the origins of our civil law: while it is not a facsimile of the French Civil Code, it follows in the same tradition. The new civil code is not just a Bill; it's a social blueprint. It's not a collection of technical regulations; it's a wellspring of values. One could say that it's a social construct-a set of shared issues and principles that affirm and strengthen values and inspire men and women in their everyday lives-a source of the rights and responsibilities taught to me by Professor Paul-André Crépeau, who just received a medal from the Barreau de Montréal. As he has said, and as Gil Rémillard has said, it's a mini-charter of rights. And it also serves to define Quebec as a distinct society.

I would also like to take this opportunity to underscore the importance of the visit by the Secretary of State for Victims' Rights and her presence here today. The title of the position she holds defines both the French vision and the importance of those values. This morning we discussed the issues and the common cause that unites us, the protection of society, human security and the rights of victims of terrorism, and the protection of the most vulnerable among us. I believe the test of a just society is the way it treats its most vulnerable members: children, women, and minorities.

Then there is the struggle against hate and racism. I would like to point out that France has always been a leader in the struggle against hate and discrimination, working within one of the most complex legal systems in the world in its fight against discrimination and especially hate propaganda. And they are making the people of France more aware of the threats and dangers of incitement to racism and hatred.

Next, there is the struggle against mass atrocities. I would like to underscore the personal commitment of Madame Guedj, a leading defender of human rights. She does more than just hold the title of Secretary of State for Victims' Rights. She is fully committed to, and heavily involved in, the struggle for human rights.

Finally, let me say that I foresee a great deal of cooperation between France, Quebec and Canada on protecting victims' rights. We will form a triad, if I may use the term, a legal and educational triad through which the French and the new Quebec civil codes can lead the way in the war against

discrimination.

Thank you.

Date Modified: **2008-04-14**